

GLOBAL CITRUS SCAN (39)

John Edmonds (6 November 2015)



Citrus Growers Association (CGA)

South African citrus growers “seriously duped” by EU restrictions, says Eosta

A leading European supplier of organic fruits and vegetables has strongly criticized the community’s approach to South African citrus imports, claiming it ‘smells like a protectionist measure’. Netherlands-based Eosta said EU-bound South African citrus exports had been stopped for three years in a row under the threat of bans, each time around the start of the European citrus season. “Citrus exports from South America, with substantially more black spot [CBS] interceptions in smaller trade volumes, were not stopped,” the company said. “According to scientists the spread of black spot in Europe via infected fruits is impossible.” Black spot is a fungal disease in citrus fruit that can occur around the world in subtropical climates, Eosta said. “The fungus causes small black lesions on fruits which makes the product difficult to sell, although the damage is purely cosmetic and the eating quality of fruit is not affected. There is no health hazard either.” The group added that trees did not die from the disease, as is the case with some other citrus diseases like Citrus Sudden Death (CSD) that has killed millions of citrus trees in Brazil. “The black spot issue nevertheless has a major economic impact,” Eosta said. “Citrus growers in South Africa in particular have been seriously duped by the situation. In November 2013 the first stop on citrus exports from certain parts of South Africa was initiated under threat of a ban by the European Food Safety Authority. “This pattern was repeated in subsequent years. In 2014 and 2015, South African citrus growers stopped exporting in September after ‘hits’ were found in a minimal number of export lots.” The company also said in the meantime, the price tag of the risk management system had expanded to ‘ridiculous levels’, all at the expense of growers...“According to EU Europhyt reports, from March to September 2015, twenty-six interceptions occurred in shipments from Argentina and Uruguay, while only twelve interceptions occurred in shipments from South Africa.” Eosta director Volkert Engelsman, who founded the company in 1990 and imports organic fruit from both regions, claims the ban is “disputable from a scientific point of view.” “The disease cycle of the fungus is of such a nature that the disease cannot spread to trees from the lesions contained on mature fruit,” he said. “Furthermore an international expert panel of scientists pointed out in 2013 that there is no risk of transmission to European climates. “The fungus simply does not occur in areas with a Mediterranean climate.” He added that the Western Cape province in South Africa has a Mediterranean climate and has been growing lemons for 80 years, and the Eastern Cape is an area where black spot occurs and has also been growing lemons for the same amount of time. “There is no restriction on citrus movements between these two areas. Yet black spot has not managed to establish itself in the Western Cape, not in eighty years’ time,” he said...Seeing that only imports from South Africa are affected, one wonders if this is really a sanitary measure, or a disguised trade barrier. “It looks a lot like the EU wanting to protect southern European citrus growers. At the same time one wonders why citrus from Argentina has not been stopped in spite of higher hit rates on smaller quantities.”

[freshfruitportal.com; 6 November 2015]

Israeli citrus Israeli citrus regains access to China

Exporters can once again ship their fruit to the Chinese market, after authorities from the Asian country lifted a ban that had been in place since 2011. China had cited interceptions of the plant pathogen *Phloeophthora syringae* Kleb in several shipments of Israeli grapefruit as the reason for the suspension...“For us, China is a very important market,” said Sandra Greif, Far East business manager of Israel’s largest citrus grower, Mehadrin Tnuport Export (MTEX)...Sunrise red grapefruit makes up 90% of the upcoming shipment to China...Despite the large volumes of Sunrise Israeli citrus companies export to China, MTEX is hoping to diversify its offerings with green grapefruits such as Sweetie. “At the Asia Fruit Logistica held in Hong Kong last month, we discovered that many clients were interested in this new variety and willing to increase their orders,” Sandra said...

[freshfruitportal.com; 2 November 2015]

Florida fights citrus pest by mimicking its mating call

Richard Mankin, an entomologist at the USDA’s Center for Medical, Agricultural and Veterinary Entomology in Gainesville has developed a type of vibration trap that disrupts communication between male and female psyllids, thereby controlling their spread. The psyllids young feed on the new shoots and leaves of the trees, sucking out the sap and injecting a toxin in its place. If the insect has previously fed on a plant containing the bacterium that causes citrus greening, it will infect the tree in turn. Once that happens, it is a slow steady march toward the tree’s inevitable demise. Mankin thinks his vibration traps could offer a more environmentally friendly solution. “The route I’m trying to take is disrupting mating and putting out signals that either out compete the females and bring males to a trapping system, or just make it difficult for males and females to communicate with each other,” he said...

[Freshplaza.com; 4 November 2015]

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